

Section 3

Tending to Spirit/Culture

Tunes on the Radio

- 3:1** Developing a Climate/Culture Committee
- 3:2** Auditing and Understanding Your School's Culture
- 3:3** Strengthening Teacher-Student Relationships
- 3:4** Developing a School-wide Behavior Management Plan
- 3:5** Mentoring New Teachers
- 3:6** Creating a Supportive Teaching and Learning Environment for English Language Learners
- 3:7** Linking Home, School, and Community for Families of English Language Learners
- 3:8** Building Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement in Middle and High Schools

When you ease your shiny, new wheels (or your wheezing, ancient junker) out onto the highway and see that stretch of road open up before you, what do you hear? Is Etta James or Marcia Ball moaning the blues? Or is someone punching out the upbeat, contagious rhythms of "Anything Goes!" or "We Are Family!" And when someone steps into your school, what's the "music" they sense in the hallways? In the classroom? In the lunchroom? In the office? In the teachers' lounge?

Researchers like those we cite in this cluster of packets point to genuine (perhaps causal) connections between the spirit of a place and the substantive achievement that takes place there.

For one thing, kids who feel cared about bloom. "My teacher cares about me" is still the best predictor of student achievement. And a school that succeeds in surrounding an "at-risk" child with a spirit of caring and hope gives him/her the best possible chance to rise to a personal best.

For another, demonstrably different things become possible when students want to come to school and educators want to come to work. The hard, sustained, creative work of changing an institution like a school is very unlikely to happen from isolated individual efforts, no matter how heroic. But an active, self-aware "learning community" nurturing its own adult-adult relationships and taking collective pride in what they are able to build together is capable of accomplishing things otherwise impossible.

And if there IS that sense of being part of a meaningful learning community, well, the Sister Sledge had it right: "We are Family!"

Build for yourselves the culture you want to be part of!

